



Anglican Office for
Government &
International Affairs

Faith & Elections

Navigating the Political Landscape with
Biblical Principles



General Elections Edition
Plus Special Clergy Guide

Introduction: The Anglican Influence in American Politics

The Anglican Church in the United States, represented by various bodies such as the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) and the Reformed Episcopal Church and has a long and complex history of engagement in political activism and the struggle for human rights. Rooted in the Anglican tradition of social responsibility and the pursuit of justice, American Anglicans have played significant roles in various social and political movements throughout the nation's history.

Colonial Era and the American Revolution

During the colonial period, the Church of England was the established church in many of the American colonies, and Anglican clergy were often involved in political affairs. Some notable examples include Rev. Jonathan Mayhew, a prominent Anglican clergyman in Boston, Mayhew was an outspoken critic of British colonial rule and a proponent of the principles of liberty and self-governance that would later inspire the American Revolution (Bonomi, 2003).

Men like Samuel Seabury, an Anglican priest in New York and a loyalist during the American Revolution who later became the first bishop of the Anglican Church in the United States. Despite the diverse political views among Anglican clergy and laity, the American Revolution marked a significant turning point for the Anglican Church in the colonies. After independence, the Church of England in America reorganized itself, adapting its liturgy and governance to the new political reality (Prichard, 1999).

19th Century and the Abolitionist Movement

In the decades leading up to the American Civil War, many Anglican clergy and lay members were active in the abolitionist movement, which sought to end slavery in the United States.

Notable figures include the Reverend Theodore Sedgwick Wright, one of the first African American ordained ministers in the United States, Wright was a prominent abolitionist and advocate for the education of Black Americans (Alexander, 1996).

Bishop Alonzo Potter was an Anglican bishop in Pennsylvania, Potter was a vocal opponent of slavery and supported the abolitionist cause (Quinn, 1980). However, the Anglican Church as an institution was divided on the issue of slavery, with many southern Dioceses defending the practice. The Civil War and the abolition of slavery led to a period of reconciliation and rebuilding within the church (Prichard, 1999).

20th Century and Beyond

In the 20th century and beyond, the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) and the Reformed Episcopal Church have continued to engage with political and social issues, guided by their understanding of Anglican theology and social responsibility. Issues surrounding the role and authority of Holy Scripture, a Biblically faithful understanding of human sexuality, a biblically informed view of marriage, and an orthodox Anglican understanding of Holy Orders all led to a split in the Episcopal Church at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st Century.

Anglican Church in North America (ACNA)

Founded in 2009, the ACNA is a conservative Anglican denomination that has taken positions on various political and social issues, such as abortion, marriage, and Religious Liberty. The ACNA encourages its members to be active in their communities and to engage in political processes in accordance with their faith. Like Anglicans before the forming of the ACNA, the recently formed ACNA has a history of social engagement and has taken positions on issues such as sanctity of life, traditional marriage, and religious freedom that are consistent with a Biblically faithful, orthodox Anglican perspective. The history of American Anglican engagement in political activism and voting rights is a rich and complex one, reflecting the church's commitment to social justice and the pursuit of a more equitable society. From the colonial era to the present day, Anglican clergy and laity have been active participants in various social and political movements, seeking to apply their faith to the challenges of the world around them.

As Anglican denominations like the Anglican Church in North America and the Reformed Episcopal Church continue to navigate the complexities of political engagement, they remain rooted in the Anglican tradition of social responsibility and the call to seek justice and peace for all people. Anglicans serve in elected office at local, state, and federal levels and work in almost every branch of the Federal Government. The ACNA also has several notable members who serve in a number of political think-tanks and NGO's in Washington, D.C. and around the world. The proud tradition of public service by Anglicans is a modern day continuation of a proud and distinguished legacy of public service by Anglicans.

Several U.S. Presidents, Vice Presidents, and Supreme Court Justices have been affiliated with the Anglican tradition throughout American history.

U.S. Presidents

1. George Washington (1789-1797)
2. James Madison (1809-1817)
3. James Monroe (1817-1825)
4. William Henry Harrison (1841)
5. John Tyler (1841-1845)
6. Zachary Taylor (1849-1850)
7. Franklin Pierce (1853-1857)
8. Chester A. Arthur (1881-1885)
9. Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933-1945)
10. Gerald Ford (1974-1977)
11. George H. W. Bush (1989-1993)

Vice Presidents

1. John Adams (1789-1797)
2. George Clinton (1805-1812)
3. Elbridge Gerry (1813-1814)
4. John C. Calhoun (1825-1832)
5. Martin Van Buren (1833-1837)
6. George M. Dallas (1845-1849)
7. William A. Wheeler (1877-1881)
8. Chester A. Arthur (1881)

9. Thomas A. Hendricks (1885)
10. Levi P. Morton (1889-1893)
11. Garret Hobart (1897-1899)
12. Charles W. Fairbanks (1905-1909)
13. James S. Sherman (1909-1912)
14. Calvin Coolidge (1921-1923)
15. Nelson Rockefeller (1974-1977)

Supreme Court Justices

1. John Jay (1789-1795)
2. John Rutledge (1789-1791, 1795)
3. John Marshall (1801-1835)
4. Bushrod Washington (1798-1829)
5. John Catron (1837-1865)
6. John A. Campbell (1853-1861)
7. Nathan Clifford (1858-1881)
8. Mahlon Pitney (1912-1922)
9. Edward T. Sanford (1923-1930)
10. Potter Stewart (1958-1981)
11. Harry Blackmun (1970-1994)

It is important to note that while these individuals were affiliated with the Anglican tradition, the degree to which their faith influenced their public service and decision-making varied. Some, like George Washington and John Marshall, were known for their strong and deeply held religious convictions, while others were more private about their faith. Nonetheless, the presence of Anglicans in these high offices throughout American history underscores the significant role that the Anglican religious tradition has played in shaping our nation's political and legal landscape.

Chapter I: Understanding Biblical Principles for Christians in Politics

The Importance of Biblical Principles for Christian Engagement in Politics

As Christians, it is essential to understand the importance of applying biblical principles when engaging in politics. The Bible provides a solid foundation for our beliefs and values, and it should guide our actions in all areas of life, including politics. By aligning our political decisions with biblical teachings, we can ensure that we are promoting justice, compassion, and righteousness in our society.

One key aspect of Christian engagement in politics is the role of prayer. Prayer is a powerful tool that can help us navigate the complexities of civic responsibility, voting, and the political process. By seeking guidance through prayer, we can make decisions that reflect our faith and values. Prayer can also help us to discern the best course of action when faced with difficult choices or ethical dilemmas in the political arena.

For Anglicans, balancing faith and political beliefs in the voting booth can be a challenge. However, by grounding our political decisions in Biblical principles and seeking guidance through prayer, we can ensure that our votes align with our Christian values. Informed voting is crucial for as it allows us to make decisions that are in line with our beliefs and promote justice and righteousness in our society.

Ethical dilemmas in voting are a common issue that many Christians face. It is important for us to consider how our choices will impact the common good and uphold and affirm the values of our faith. By staying true to our beliefs and seeking guidance through prayer, we can navigate these dilemmas with integrity and ensure that our political actions are in line with our Biblical values and Christian worldview.

Throughout history, Anglicans have been active participants in political activism and voting rights. Our faith calls us to promote unity and dialogue in the midst of political divisions, as we work towards a more just and equitable society. By grounding our political engagement at the intersection of Anglican theology and civic responsibility, we can make a positive impact on our communities and bring about positive change in the world.

Navigating Political Issues with a Biblical Worldview

From a Biblical perspective, civic responsibility and participation in government, including voting, are all ways for Christians to be good stewards of the political systems they live under and to work towards the well-being of their communities. Here are a few key considerations for Christians when it comes to navigating political issues:

Submission to governing authorities:

In Romans 13:1-6, Paul instructs Christians to submit to governing authorities, as they have been established by God. Engaging in the civic process through voting is a way of respecting and participating in the governmental systems in place. St. Paul reminds us "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing."

Seeking the welfare of one's community

Jeremiah 29:7 instructs the Israelites in exile to "seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare." Voting for leaders and policies that promote the common good aligns with this call to actively work for the good of one's community. Seeking the welfare of your community will mean engaging with your local elected officials at some point, so seek to build a constructive relationship with you local leaders. Pray for them regularly and seek ways to partner together to advance the well being of those around you...or in the words of Jesus, "love your neighbor".

Using our influence for good

The Bible contains examples of believers like Joseph and Daniel who used their positions of influence within governmental systems to work for justice and the benefit of others. Voting is a way for citizens to use their voice and influence to shape their communities. Many Christians also serve on local committees, assist in polling activities, and even help certify and judge elections. Having a ministry of presence in the community lets people know you are an active citizen and these issues matter to the Christian community.

Acting as salt and light

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:13-16), Jesus calls his followers to be "salt" and "light" in the world - active influences for good. Engaging thoughtfully in the political process, including voting in line with one's values, is part of living out this calling. At the same time, it's important to note that the Bible does not directly command voting, and Christians hold a range of views on if or how to engage in politics. The Bible emphasizes that our ultimate citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20) and that no earthly government or political system can fully bring about God's kingdom. Any civic engagement should be balanced with the understanding that our primary allegiance is to Christ. Our identity as Christians should always come before any political affiliation.

Ultimately, biblical principles of stewardship, seeking the good of one's neighbors, and acting as an influence for good all support civic engagement and responsible voting. But Christians should engage in politics with wisdom, humility, and the understanding that true hope and transformation comes through Christ alone.

As Anglicans, it is important to balance our faith with our political beliefs in the voting booth. By upholding the values of our Christian faith while also considering the practical implications of our political decisions, we can ensure that our votes reflect our commitment to both God and our community. This balance allows us to engage in the political process with integrity and conviction, knowing that our actions are rooted in our faith.

Informed voting is also crucial from an Anglican perspective. By staying informed on political issues and candidates, we can make decisions that align with our values and beliefs. This requires diligence in researching and understanding the implications of our votes, ensuring that we are contributing to the common good and upholding the principles of justice, mercy, and compassion.

As Christians, we must navigate ethical dilemmas in voting by grounding our decisions in the teachings of Christ and looking through the lens of the Biblical tradition. It's important to navigate complex political issues with integrity and moral clarity. We are also called to be public witnesses for Christ and the Gospel by loving our neighbors. This doesn't mean you have to agree with them, but we are called to be charitable, kind, respectful, and honest. Remembering the words of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Church in Corinth - "does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth." When we approach the political arena and election season with a spirit of Christian love, it enables us to promote unity and dialogue in the midst of political divisions, fostering a spirit of cooperation and understanding in our communities. Finding a middle way is a hallmark of Anglican tradition and the same is true when it comes to our engagement in the world of civic engagement.

Chapter 2: The Role of Prayer in Civic Responsibility and Voting

The Power of Prayer in Political Decision Making

Prayer has always played a crucial role in the lives of Christians, guiding us in our daily decisions and actions. When it comes to political decision making, prayer is a powerful tool in seeking Godly wisdom and discernment. As Anglicans, we believe in the importance of aligning our political beliefs with biblical principles, and prayer can help us navigate the complexities of the political landscape with moral clarity and personal conviction.

In our civic responsibility as Christians, prayer is a means of seeking guidance in how to vote in a way that reflects our biblical values and beliefs. By taking the time to pray and seek God's will, we can ensure that our votes are informed by our faith and guided by the principles of love, justice, and mercy. Prayer can also help us to approach political decisions with humility and openness to different perspectives, allowing us to engage in respectful dialogue and promote unity and understanding in the midst of political divisions.

Prayer can also help us to navigate the many ethical dilemmas that may arise in the voting process, guiding us in making choices that are aligned with the teachings of Jesus and the wisdom of the Bible. As Christians, we believe that we are responsible and must account for all our actions before the Lord. What we stand for or against is something that we will all have to account for, one day, before the Lord, which is why having an electoral perspective that is consistent with our faith is so important.

In conclusion, the power of prayer in political decision making cannot be underestimated. As Anglicans, we are called to approach our civic responsibility with faith, humility, and a commitment to promoting unity and dialogue. This is not always easy, and we need prayer more than ever in election seasons. By seeking God's guidance through prayer and aligning our political beliefs with the biblical principles we hold dear, we can begin to navigate the ever complex political landscape we find our nation, state, country, city, or neighborhood in with wisdom and discernment, working towards a society that reflects the values of the Kingdom of God. Remembering we are called by Christ to be salt and light in the world around us, prayer is a powerful tool to refocus our hearts and minds on living, acting, speaking, and voting Christianly. Each week the liturgy reminds us to "love our neighbors as ourselves", that directive from Christ also applies to us during campaign season.

Praying for Wisdom and Guidance in Voting

As Christians, it is crucial to approach the act of voting with prayerful consideration and seeking wisdom and guidance from God. In the midst of a political landscape filled with conflicting ideologies and values, it can be confusing and challenging to navigate the decision-making process. However, by turning to prayer, we can align our hearts and minds with God's will and seek His guidance in making informed choices. The following are prayer resources from the Book of Common Prayer 2019.

A PRAYER FOR OUR NATION

Almighty God, who hast given us this good land for our heritage: We humbly beseech thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of thy favor and glad to do thy will. Bless our land with honorable industry, sound learning, and pure conduct. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with the spirit of wisdom those to whom, in thy Name, we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that, through obedience to thy law, we may show forth thy praise among the nations of the earth. In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in thee to fail; all of which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR THE PRESIDENT AND ALL IN CIVIL AUTHORITY

O Lord our Governor, whose glory fills all the world: We commend this Nation to your merciful care, that we may be guided by your providence, and dwell secure in your peace. Grant to the President of this Nation, the Governor of this State [or Commonwealth], and to all in authority, wisdom and strength to know and to do your will. Fill them with the love of truth and righteousness, and make them continually mindful of their calling to serve this people in reverent obedience to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR CONGRESS OR A STATE LEGISLATURE

O God, the fountain of wisdom, whose will is good and gracious, and whose law is truth: So guide and bless our Senators and Representatives assembled in Congress [or the Legislature of this State, Commonwealth, etc.], that they may enact laws pleasing in your sight, to the glory of your Name and the welfare of this people; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR THE PEACE OF THE WORLD

Almighty God, from whom all thoughts of truth and peace proceed: Kindle, we pray, in the hearts of all people the true love of peace, and guide with your pure and peaceable wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth; that in tranquility your kingdom may go forward, till the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Almighty God, you created us in your own image: Grant us grace to contend fearlessly against evil and to make no peace with oppression; and help us to use our freedom rightly in the establishment of justice in our communities and among the nations, to the glory of your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR THOSE WHO INFORM PUBLIC OPINION

Almighty God, your truth endures from age to age: Direct in our time, we pray, those who speak where many listen and write what many read; that they may speak your truth to make the heart of this people wise, its mind discerning, and its will righteous; to the honor of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

One famous quote from George Washington about prayer comes from his 1789 Thanksgiving Proclamation: "It is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor." In this same proclamation, Washington also declared that November 26, 1789, would be a national day of prayer and thanksgiving to God. He wrote: "[I] recommend to the People of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness."

These quotes reflect Washington's belief in the importance of prayer, gratitude to God, and the role of Divine providence in the establishment of the United States. As the first President of the Nation, Washington set a precedent for the role of faith and prayer in American public life that has continued to be observed in various forms, such as the National Day of Prayer, to this day.

Chapter 3: Balancing Faith and Political Beliefs in the Voting Booth: An Anglican Perspective

The Influence of Anglican Theology on Political Beliefs

Anglican theology has played a significant role in shaping the political beliefs of many Americans. The teachings of scripture in the Anglican tradition often emphasizes the importance of engaging with the world around us, including participating in the political process. By grounding our beliefs in Biblical principles, Anglicans are able to navigate the complex landscape of politics with a sense of purpose and direction.

When it comes to voting, Anglicans are encouraged to balance their faith with their political beliefs in a way that honors both. This can be a challenging task, especially in a society that is often divided along political lines and in an era where party platforms on both sides diverge from Christian principles. Anglican clergy are often asked which way the church leans politically. The Venerable Canon Justin Murff, Executive Director of the Anglican Office for Government & International Affairs is fond of saying "As a Biblically faithful Anglican, I don't lean left or lean right, I stand firm on the Word of God which informs my thought and worldview in a way that rises above the party platforms and helps me to focus on the teachings of Christ and the values he would want me to reflect in a lost and hurting world."

It may surprise some people to know that there are Republicans who care about the environment and the poor, who stand against the death penalty, and who want to fund urban schools. Equally surprising is the fact that there are some Pro-life, Pro-Faith, Pro-Family Democrats. Which is why nothing is more confusing than an Anglican Church parking lot during election season when you see the political bumper stickers on the cars, many people find themselves curious as to how such a mix of people can worship together.

It has been said that elections are the most important multiple choice test that 60% of the general public don't ever bother studying for. This is why being an informed voter is so important. Anglicans believe that it is important to be well-informed about the issues at hand and to consider how their vote will impact the common good. By taking the time to educate themselves on the candidates and their platforms, and not just party talking points, Anglicans can make choices that reflect their Biblical values and contribute to a more just society.

Upholding Biblical Values in Political Decision Making

From an Anglican perspective, voting is considered an important civic responsibility and a means of promoting the common good and the values of the Kingdom of God in society. Here are some key aspects of an Anglican perspective on voting:

Civic Duty

Anglicans believe that participating in the political process, including voting, is a way to serve and care for one's community and nation. The reality is that voting in an election is a right and a privilege that millions around the world are denied. We are truly blessed to live in a Constitutional Republic (N.B. the United States is not a Democracy, which is an important political distinctive) where we have the constitutionally protected right to vote. It is a precious responsibility that we should take seriously.

Informed Conscience

Anglicans are encouraged to vote according to their informed conscience, guided by Scripture, reason, and the teachings of the Church.

Common Good

Anglicans believe that voting should be exercised with the common good in mind, considering the needs and well-being of all members of society, especially the vulnerable and marginalized. The Anglican tradition emphasizes the importance of social justice, compassion, and solidarity with the poor and oppressed.

Prayerful Discernment

Anglicans are encouraged to approach voting with prayer and discernment, seeking God's guidance and wisdom in making decisions that align with biblical values and promote the flourishing of all people. Many Anglican Provinces have resources for elections often include prayers for voters, candidates, and the nation.

Respect for Diversity

While Anglicans may have differing political views, they are called to engage in the political process with respect, civility, and a commitment to the unity of the Church. The Anglican tradition values open and honest dialogue, recognizing that Christians may come to different conclusions on specific policy issues.

Prophetic Witness

Anglicans believe that the Church has a prophetic role in speaking truth to power and advocating for policies that promote justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. Voting can be a means of expressing the Church's prophetic witness and influencing the political sphere for the sake of the Gospel.

In summary, from an Anglican perspective, voting is a civic duty and a means of promoting the common good, social justice, and the values of the Kingdom of God in society. Anglicans are encouraged to vote with an informed conscience, guided by prayer and discernment, and with respect for the diversity of political views within the Church. By participating in the democratic process, Anglicans seek to bear witness to the transformative power of the Gospel and work towards a society that reflects God's love and justice for all people.

Chapter 4: The Importance of Informed Voting from an Anglican Perspective

Researching Candidates and Understanding Policies

When it comes to participating in politics as Christians, it is essential to approach the voting booth with a sense of responsibility and discernment. One of the key aspects of this responsibility is researching candidates and understanding their policies. As Anglicans, it is important to align our political beliefs with biblical principles and values. By researching candidates and their policies, we can make informed decisions that reflect our faith and values.

When evaluating political candidates, Christians should consider a variety of factors and approach the decision-making process with prayer, wisdom, and a commitment to biblical principles.

Here are some key considerations:

Alignment with Biblical Values

Christians should assess candidates' positions on issues in light of biblical teaching. While no candidate will perfectly embody Christian values, believers should look for candidates whose policies and priorities are most consistent with scriptural principles of justice, compassion, stewardship, and the sanctity of human life (Proverbs 14:34; Micah 6:8).

Character and Integrity

The Bible emphasizes the importance of character in leadership (Proverbs 28:6). Christians should consider candidates' personal integrity, moral conduct, and consistency in word and deed. While all candidates are imperfect, Christians should seek to support those who demonstrate honesty, humility, and a commitment to ethical behavior (Exodus 18:21).

Competence and Experience

Christians should evaluate candidates' qualifications, experience, and ability to effectively carry out the responsibilities of the office they seek. The Bible values wisdom and prudence in leadership (Proverbs 8:12-16), and Christians should look for candidates who possess the knowledge, skills, and judgment necessary to govern well.

Positions on Key Issues

Christians should carefully consider candidates' stances on issues that are central to their faith and values. These may include positions on religious liberty, the sanctity of human life, marriage and family, care for the poor and vulnerable, and the promotion of justice and peace. While no single issue should necessarily be determinative, Christians should weigh candidates' overall alignment with biblical principles across a range of policy areas.

Party Platform and Ideology

While Christians may find alignment with certain aspects of a political party's platform, they should be discerning in evaluating how the party's overall ideology and agenda correspond with biblical values. Christians should resist uncritically adopting any party's positions and should prioritize fidelity to scriptural principles over partisan loyalty (Psalm 146:3).

Prayer and Discernment

As Christians evaluate candidates, they should approach the decision-making process with prayer and a posture of humility and openness to God's leading (James 1:5). Seeking wisdom from Scripture, godly counsel, and the Holy Spirit's guidance can help Christians make informed and faith-driven choices in the voting booth.

Unity and Respect

Christians should recognize that fellow believers may come to different conclusions about which candidates to support. Even as they advocate for their convictions, Christians should prioritize unity in the body of Christ and treat those with differing political views with respect and grace (Ephesians 4:2-3). Ultimately, the decision of which candidate to vote for is a matter of personal conscience and discernment for each Christian.

By approaching the evaluation of candidates with prayer, careful consideration of biblical principles, and a commitment to acting in faith and integrity, Christians can seek to make voting decisions that honor God and contribute to the well-being of their communities and nation.

Scripture provides some key lessons:

Exodus 18:21 - "Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens." (ESV)

James 1:5 - "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." (ESV)

Micah 6:8 - "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (ESV)

Proverbs 8:12-16 - "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion. The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate. I have counsel and sound wisdom; I have insight; I have strength. By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just; by me princes rule, and nobles, all who govern justly." (ESV)

Proverbs 14:34 - "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." (ESV)

Proverbs 28:6 - "Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who is crooked in his ways." (ESV)

Psalms 146:3 - "Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation." (ESV)

Making Informed Decisions Based on Anglican Values

Making informed decisions based on Anglican values is crucial for Christians, especially Anglicans, when navigating the complex world of politics. As followers of Christ, it is important to approach political decisions with a foundation rooted in biblical principles. By aligning our beliefs with historic Anglican values like those expressed in the Jerusalem Declaration, we can make decisions that reflect our faith and contribute to a more just and compassionate society.

Christians can best inform themselves on political issues from a biblical perspective by engaging in a multi-faceted approach that includes studying Scripture, seeking wisdom from trusted Christian leaders and resources, and prayerfully considering how biblical principles apply to contemporary political challenges. Here are some key steps Christians can take:

Study Scripture

A thorough understanding of biblical principles and values should form the foundation for a Christian's political perspective. By studying passages related to topics such as justice, compassion, stewardship, and the role of government, believers can gain insight into God's heart for how societies should function (Proverbs 31:8-9; Micah 6:8; Romans 13:1-7).

Seek Wisdom from Christian Leaders

Christians can benefit from the insights of pastors, theologians, and Christian thinkers who have studied the intersection of faith and politics. Reading books, articles, and commentaries from respected Christian leaders can provide valuable guidance in navigating complex political issues (Groothuis, 2000).

Engage with Christian Organizations

Many Christian organizations, such as the Anglican Office for Government & International Affairs, the Institute for Religion and Democracy, Religious Freedom Institute, and the Heritage Foundation, offer resources and analysis on political issues from a biblical perspective. These organizations can provide helpful frameworks for thinking through policy questions in light of Christian values (Monsma, 2006).

Participate in Church Community

Engaging in discussions and study with fellow believers in the context of a local church can provide a supportive environment for exploring political issues from a biblical perspective. Small group studies, Sunday school classes, and forums on faith and politics can facilitate growth and understanding (Gutenson, 2016).

Pray for Wisdom and Discernment

As Christians seek to inform their political views, it is essential to approach the process with humility and a dependence on God's guidance. Praying for wisdom, discernment, and a heart that is aligned with God's will should be a central part of a believer's political engagement (James 1:5).

Consider Multiple Perspectives

While the Bible provides clear moral principles, it does not always prescribe specific policy solutions. Christians should be willing to consider multiple perspectives on complex issues and engage in respectful dialogue with those who hold different views. By listening to others and seeking to understand their concerns, believers can develop a more nuanced and well-informed political outlook (Beckwith, 2004).

Prioritize Biblical Values

As Christians engage with political issues, it is important to prioritize biblical values such as love, justice, compassion, and truth. While specific policy positions may vary, believers should consistently advocate for solutions that reflect these foundational Christian principles (Hollenbach, 2003). Ultimately, informing one's political views from a biblical perspective requires a commitment to studying Scripture, seeking wisdom from trusted sources, engaging in prayerful discernment, and prioritizing biblical values. By approaching political issues with humility, openness, and a desire to honor God, Christians can develop a thoughtful and principled approach to civic engagement.

As Anglicans navigate ethical dilemmas in voting, it is important to rely on the teachings of our faith and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. By grounding our decisions in Anglican theology and principles, we can navigate complex political issues with integrity and wisdom. Ultimately, the intersection of Anglican theology and civic responsibility calls us to engage in the political process with a spirit of humility, compassion, and a commitment to justice.

Chapter 5: Addressing Ethical Dilemmas in Voting: Anglican Perspectives

Ethical Considerations in Voting from an Anglican Viewpoint

When it comes to voting, Anglicans believe that ethical considerations should guide their decision-making process. As Christians, we are called to uphold biblical principles in all areas of our lives, including our participation in politics. This means that when we enter the voting booth, we must carefully consider how our choices align with our faith and values.

Christians often encounter various ethical and moral conflicts when deciding how to vote. Some key issues and considerations for navigating them biblically include:

Sanctity of Life

Christians who believe in the inherent value and dignity of all human life from conception to natural death may struggle with supporting candidates or policies that promote or allow practices like abortion or euthanasia. They may prioritize candidates who advocate for pro-life policies, while also considering how to support women in crisis pregnancies and promote a holistic ethic of life (Psalm 139:13-16; Proverbs 31:8-9).

Religious Liberty

Christians may face conflicts when candidates or policies threaten to infringe upon the free exercise of religion or seek to compel believers to act against their consciences. They should consider how to balance the call to submit to governing authorities (Romans 13:1-7) with the duty to obey God rather than men when the two are in conflict (Acts 5:29).

Religious liberty and religious freedom are closely related concepts that are often used interchangeably. However, there can be some nuanced differences in how these terms are understood and applied:

Religious Liberty

Religious liberty is often used in the context of the United States Constitution and the First Amendment, which states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Religious Liberty emphasizes the legal protections granted to individuals and religious institutions to practice their faith freely without government interference or persecution. Religious liberty is seen as a fundamental human right that the government has a duty to protect and promote. In recent years, debates surrounding religious liberty have often focused on the extent to which religious individuals and organizations can be exempt from laws that conflict with their beliefs (e.g., in areas of healthcare, education, and public accommodations).

Religious Freedom

Religious freedom is a broader term that encompasses the principles of religious liberty but can also have wider global and philosophical connotations. Religious Freedom refers to the fundamental human right to choose, practice, and express one's religious beliefs without fear of discrimination, persecution, or coercion.

Religious freedom is recognized in international human rights documents, such as Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states, "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion." - Discussions of religious freedom often address issues of religious pluralism, tolerance, and the role of religion in public life across diverse cultural and political contexts.

While religious liberty and religious freedom are closely interconnected, religious liberty tends to focus more on the legal and constitutional protections for religious practice within a specific national context, while religious freedom encompasses a broader philosophical and international understanding of the right to believe and practice one's faith freely.

In essence, both terms affirm the fundamental importance of protecting the right of individuals and communities to hold and express religious beliefs without undue interference or persecution. For Christians, advocating for religious liberty and freedom is an important way to promote human dignity, defend the rights of all people to seek and worship God according to their consciences, and create a society where people of all faiths can live out their beliefs with integrity and respect.

Social Justice and Compassion

The Bible consistently emphasizes God's concern for the poor, vulnerable, and oppressed (Proverbs 14:31; James 1:27). Christians may encounter tensions when considering candidates who have differing approaches to issues like poverty alleviation, immigration, and racial justice. They should strive to evaluate policies in light of biblical principles of compassion, justice, and love for neighbors (Micah 6:8).

Stewardship of Creation

As stewards of God's creation (Genesis 1:28), Christians may face difficult choices when considering candidates' positions on environmental policies. They should seek to balance responsible use and care for the earth with considerations of economic impact and human flourishing.

Marriage and Family

The Bible affirms the sanctity of marriage between one man and one woman and emphasizes the importance of strong families (Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:22-6:4). Christians may struggle when considering candidates who promote policies that undermine or redefine traditional marriage and family structures. As biblically faithful Christians, we should prioritize supporting policies that strengthen and protect the family unit.

Integrity and Character

Christians are called to value honesty, integrity, and moral character in their leaders (Proverbs 29:2). They may face conflicts when choosing between candidates who have differing levels of personal integrity or moral conduct. While no candidate is perfect, Christians should prioritize supporting those who demonstrate consistency, humility, and ethical behavior.

To navigate these conflicts biblically, Christians should:

1. Pray for wisdom and discernment (James 1:5).
2. Study Scripture to inform their values and priorities (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
3. Seek wise counsel from your rector, Christian leaders, and fellow believers (Proverbs 11:14).
4. Evaluate each candidate and policy in light of biblical principles, not just party affiliation (Acts 17:11).
5. Prioritize issues based on biblical significance and moral urgency (Matthew 23:23).
6. Recognize that no candidate or party will perfectly represent biblical values and be prepared to make difficult choices (Psalm 146:3).
7. Extend grace and respect to fellow believers who come to different conclusions (Romans 14:1-12).

Ultimately, Christians should remember that their ultimate hope and allegiance belong to Christ and His eternal kingdom, not to any earthly political system (Philippians 3:20). By anchoring their political engagement in biblical principles, seeking God's guidance, and acting with conviction and compassion, Christians can navigate the ethical and moral conflicts at the ballot box with faith and integrity.

In promoting unity and dialogue in the midst of political divisions, Anglicans can draw upon our rich tradition of theological reflection and civic responsibility. By engaging in conversations with humility and grace, we can model the love of Christ in a world that often seems divided. As we navigate the political landscape with biblical principles as our guide, we can work towards a more just and compassionate society for all.

Conclusion: Embracing Faith and Politics with Wisdom and Grace

In conclusion, it is clear that as Christians, and particularly as Anglicans, we are called to navigate the complex intersection of faith and politics with wisdom and grace. The biblical principles that guide our beliefs should also inform our actions in the political realm. We have a responsibility to engage in the democratic process with integrity, seeking to uphold the values of justice, mercy, and love that are central to our faith.

Prayer is a powerful tool that can guide us in our civic responsibility and voting decisions. By seeking God's guidance and wisdom through prayer, we can align our choices with His will and purpose. Prayer can also help us to navigate the challenges and ethical dilemmas that often arise in the political arena, reminding us to act with humility and compassion towards others.

As Anglicans, we must strive to balance our faith with our political beliefs in the voting booth. This requires a thoughtful and informed approach to voting, considering how our choices align with the teachings of Scripture and the values of our church. It is important to seek unity and dialogue with our fellow believers, even when we may hold differing political views, in order to promote understanding and collaboration within our community.

Chapter 6: Practical Guidance for Clergy

The intersection of faith and politics presents a complex landscape for Anglican clergy to navigate, particularly during election seasons. As spiritual leaders, clergy members have a responsibility to guide their congregations in understanding the biblical principles that inform political engagement while also respecting legal boundaries and maintaining the church's primary focus on worship and ministry. It's important to understand the legal and biblical responsibilities of Anglican clergy related to political involvement and elections. It's also helpful to explore the historical and contemporary use of churches as polling locations and venues for political events, offering guidance on how to approach these practices with discernment and integrity.

Legal Responsibilities and Cautions

Tax-Exempt Status and Political Campaign Activity Churches and religious organizations in the United States are generally exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. However, this tax-exempt status comes with certain restrictions on political campaign activity. According to the IRS, 501(c)(3) organizations, including churches, are prohibited from "directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office" (IRS, 2022). This prohibition includes endorsing candidates, making financial contributions to campaigns, and distributing statements supporting or opposing candidates. Violation of these rules could result in the loss of a church's tax-exempt status, which would have significant financial and legal consequences (Piper & Hines, 2020).

Individual Clergy and Free Speech

While churches are subject to restrictions on political campaign activity, individual clergy members retain their constitutional right to free speech and may express their personal political views as private citizens (James, 2018). However, clergy should take care to clearly distinguish their personal opinions from those of their church or the Anglican denomination as a whole. As a general rule, it's important to remember that there is never not a time when a deacon is not a deacon, a time when a priest is not a priest, a time when a Bishop is not a Bishop.

When speaking or writing in their individual capacity, clergy should avoid using church resources, such as letterhead or email accounts, and should refrain from making political statements from the pulpit or in official church publications (Pew Research Center, 2012). By maintaining a clear separation between their personal political views and their role as spiritual leaders, clergy can protect both their own free speech rights and the integrity of their churches.

Biblical Responsibilities - Submission to Governing Authorities (Romans 13:1-7)

The Bible teaches that Christians are to submit to governing authorities, recognizing that they are established by God. In Romans 13:1-7, the Apostle Paul writes, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God" (English Standard Version). This passage calls on believers to respect and honor those in positions of authority, regardless of their political affiliations or policies.

As spiritual leaders, Anglican clergy should encourage their congregations to pray for those in government and to adopt an attitude of respect and submission, even when they may disagree with specific political decisions or policies (Carson, 2015). B. Seeking the Welfare of the Community (Jeremiah 29:7) The biblical prophet Jeremiah, writing to the Israelites in exile in Babylon, instructs them to "seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jeremiah 29:7, English Standard Version). This passage highlights the importance of actively working for the good of the communities in which God has placed us. Anglican clergy should guide their congregations in understanding this principle and its application to political engagement.

This may involve encouraging participation in the political process, such as voting and advocating for just policies, while refraining from partisan rhetoric that could divide the church or detract from its primary mission (VanDrunen, 2012).

Acting as Salt and Light (Matthew 5:13-16)

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declares, "You are the salt of the earth" and "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13-14, English Standard Version). These metaphors emphasize the role of Christians as a positive influence in the world, preserving what is good and illuminating the truth. As Christian leaders, Anglican clergy should model and inspire their congregations to embody these characteristics in their political engagement. This includes promoting values consistent with biblical teaching, such as compassion, justice, and integrity, while engaging in political discussions with grace and respect (Stallsworth, 2019). By acting as salt and light, clergy and their congregations can make a meaningful impact on the political sphere without compromising their witness or unity.

Churches as Polling Locations and Venues for Political Events

There is a historical precedent since the founding of the United States, churches have often served as gathering places for communities, including their use as polling locations and venues for political events. In the early years of the nation, it was common for political leaders to address matters of public concern from church pulpits. For example, Patrick Henry, a prominent figure in the American Revolution, famously delivered his "Give me liberty, or give me death!" speech at St. John's Church in Richmond, Virginia (Swanson, 2022). Similarly, John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, was known to discuss political issues in his church (Dreisbach, 2004). These historical examples demonstrate the long-standing role of churches as centers of community life and political discourse in the United States. B.

Current Practices and Considerations In contemporary times, many churches continue to serve as polling locations during elections. When doing so, it is essential that churches maintain a neutral stance and do not show bias or favoritism towards any particular candidate or political party (Pew Research Center, 2012).

Churches may also choose to rent out their facilities for political events, such as town halls or candidate forums. However, clergy should ensure that all candidates are given equal opportunity to participate and that the events are not perceived as endorsements of any specific candidate or party (IRS, 2022). Additionally, clergy should be mindful that political events do not disrupt the church's primary mission of worship and ministry or create division within the congregation (Stallsworth, 2019).

Anglican clergy have a responsibility to navigate the complex intersection of faith and politics with wisdom, integrity, and a clear understanding of their legal and biblical obligations. By recognizing the limitations on partisan political activity imposed by their churches' tax-exempt status, clergy can protect the financial and legal well-being of their organizations. At the same time, clergy should encourage their congregations to engage in the political process as responsible citizens, guided by biblical principles such as submitting to governing authorities, seeking the welfare of their communities, and acting as salt and light in the world. The historical use of churches as community gathering places and venues for political discourse should be balanced with the need to maintain a clear distinction between the church's spiritual mission and partisan politics. By approaching political involvement and elections with discernment, grace, and a commitment to unity, Anglican clergy can effectively lead their congregations in fulfilling their civic duties while remaining faithful to their primary calling as ministers of the Gospel.

Throughout history, Anglicans have been actively engaged in political activism and the fight for voting rights. We can draw inspiration from this legacy as we seek to promote justice and equality in our society today. By participating in the political process with a commitment to ethical principles and a desire for unity, we can make a positive impact on our communities and advocate for the values that are dear to our faith.

In embracing faith and politics with wisdom and grace, we have the opportunity to be agents of change in our world. By grounding our political engagement in the teachings of Scripture and the values of our Anglican tradition, we can promote a more just and compassionate society.

Let us continue to seek God's guidance through prayer, engage in informed and ethical voting practices, and work towards unity and dialogue in the midst of political divisions. Together, we can make a difference in our communities and contribute to the flourishing of God's kingdom on earth.

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